



TRINITY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

on the Branford Green

May you find Christ, Community and Compassion within these historic walls.

Easter Sunday 4-27,2016

The Rev. Sharon K. Gracen

Happy, happy Easter. It's been a long Lenten, desert journey to get to this moment. To finally be in the light of Easter morning is joy, pure divine joy. So let's get down to this story. Each of the four gospels has its own take on this morning. The thing they all agree on is the presence of the women at the empty tomb, on the morning of the third day. From there the stories diverge. In Luke's telling, two figures, in dazzling white, appear to the grieving and confused women. It seems as though these angels, or whatever they are, are a little surprised that the women are expecting to find a corpse. After all, hadn't he told them often enough that all of this would happen; that he would be killed in Jerusalem but that that wouldn't be the end of the story. He had told them that Easter would come. He would triumph over the forces of evil and darkness and death. So why were the women so surprised? Apparently they needed to be reminded of what he had said. Perhaps the stress of his arrest, trial and execution had taken its toll. But it's hard for me to believe that no one among the group had brought his words to mind. And then it gets worse.

The women return and tell the rest of the group what has happened and they are dismissed as engaging in "idle talk." I won't even go into what that sounds like to me but apparently the men hadn't considered the possibility that Jesus had actually prepared them for this, either. He did after all, warn them that this would happen. I wonder if when they heard that, they had thought Jesus was engaging in idle talk. They certainly didn't seem to give much credence to it, at least enough to remember it when the time came. I would think that such a prediction would be memorable. It also makes me wonder what else they considered "idle talk?"

That Jesus could undo death, undoes most of what we understand about how life works. There is a beginning, a middle and an end. And, at least as far as the end of a physical life is concerned, the end is truly the end. Jesus might have raised Lazarus but eventually he will die again. So Jesus' talk about being raised was outside of the realm of possibility. I wonder if they considered things like peace and justice and an end to violent oppression also outside of the possible.

Well, guess what? It's Easter and so we now get to reconsider lots of things.

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Think of the beatitudes. Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God. How about that the most important thing is to love God and each other and your neighbor. Forgiveness and abundance, and non-violence. As hard as it might have been to anticipate the resurrection, what about these themes of Jesus' ministry. Did they truly accept and embrace such a vision or was it just the way Jesus talked? The bigger question is, do we believe in such a vision?

Well, I believe that the resurrection gives added weight to everything else that Jesus taught. And this morning we can with confidence accept that the way to joy is the way that he brings, starting with love. Let's believe that the more you love, the more love you will have to give and the greater will be your joy. This is true of our closest relationships, our nodding acquaintances and those around the world we do not know at all. Jesus Christ is risen today - believe in love - it isn't idle talk.

Jesus is the Prince of Peace. Do we really believe in peace or is that just idle talk? Is peace a sweet dream and nice Christmas cards but it's not very realistic. Guess again. The way to peace is right there in Jesus' words and example, love your neighbor, love your enemy, forgive and learn faith in place of fear. If Jesus can come back from the dead as he said he would, is this not also possible. Jesus Christ is risen today - believe in peace, that wasn't idle talk either.

The Kingdom of Heaven is already here, right in your midst. It's easy to see how this might sound like idle talk - after all look around the world and what do you see; poverty, terrorism, reality TV - not much heaven there. Well Jesus spent a lot of time curing blindness - do you think they might be related? Jesus Christ is risen today, believe that heaven is right here just waiting for us to look for it and find it.

Look around, what do you see? Italians, Irish, Scots, Indians, French, Haitians, Kenyans, Syrians, Chinese, - except that Jesus said that while those might be lovely distinctions, they really don't matter, actually none of our differences matter, because we all come from the same source. He taught us pray as if we were all one family, saying "Our Father." Can we believe that we are all one. Stranger things have happened. Jesus Christ is risen today. If we can believe that then why should any of the rest be so hard? Death has been conquered, love has triumphed and we are now the Body of Christ. Nothing is impossible. It's not idle talk. It's Easter. Alleluia!

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